

96 MP farmers graduate from DA-CAR's SOA on strawberry production and management

More strawberry produce is being eyed in Mountain Province as 96 farmer-enrollees were confirmed graduates from the Department of Agriculture-Cordillera's (DA-CAR) School-on-Air (SOA) course on Strawberry Production and Management on December 4, 2020 at the Bontoc Multi-Purpose Hall, Bontoc, Mt. Province.

The farmer-graduates from the five-identified strawberry producing municipalities namely Sabangan, Sagada, Bauko, Besao, and Bontoc have completed the course requirements particularly assessment and practicum which is a pre-requisite for graduation.

SoA Subject Matter Specialist Samy M. Lang-ay who served as the Guest Speaker encouraged the graduates to continue their interest in strawberry farming and apply their learnings noting that strawberry farming was able to produce the needs of his family as well as his siblings who are also strawberry farmers.

"Maamatiak kadakayo nga graduates nga makayayo ti panagstrawberry. Adda lang mainayon ko nga kasapulan ti adu nga anus, sangkatimba nga gaget, napigsa nga dedikasyon, agsinumbangir nga diskarte ken nayunan metlang ti dakkel nga ayat ken kaimportantean ti panangikamang kenni Apo Dios (I believe that you, graduates, will be able to handle strawberry farming. I just want to add that we need lots of patience, pail full of industriousness, strong dedication, back-to-back strategies added with great love and most importantly, by always referring it to God)," Lang-ay said.

Meanwhile, Regional High Value Crops Development Program focal person Joan D. Bacbac said that strawberry was identified as a high value commodity and is relevant in the province because they already have strawberry production sites in some municipalities. She added that the SOA which is a form of distance learning is timely and has allowed for the transfer of information and knowledge considering that face-to-face learning was limited due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We are thankful because we gained knowledge despite the pandemic. We also realized that strawberries are very profitable and have a lot of health benefits," shared Top 1 Best Performing Student Safe B. Pekas from Kin-iway, Besao, Mt. Province.

Other best performing students were Julie Sano-an (Sadsadan, Bauko) and Analy Khayad (Maligcong, Bontoc) who landed Top 2 and Top 3 Best Performing Students. One student from each municipality was also awarded Best in Practicum namely Safe Pekas, Julie Sano-an (Bauko), Joy Anchummang (Maligcong, Bontoc), Tomas Langbayan (Data, Sabangan), and Pedro Langbay (Dagdag, Sagada).

In his message, DA-CAR OIC-Regional Executive Director Cameron P. Odsey also encouraged the farmer-graduates to comply with the government requirements such as registering to the Registry System for Basic Sectors in Agriculture or RSBSA and applying for DA accreditation in order to avail of agriculture-related assistance. He added that they should continue with their farming activities while abiding by the good agricultural practices towards a more sustainable farming.

The three-month long SOA course was aired through the Radyo Sagada, a local radio station located in Poblacion, Sagada. Airing ran from September – November this year.

The Graduation Ceremony was witnessed by Besao Mayor Hon. Johnson Bantog II, Sabangan Mayor Marcial Lawilao Jr., Bontoc Mayor Franklin Odsey, Sagada Councilor Paul Domoguen representing Mayor James Pooten, Provincial Administrator Johnny Co representing Gov. Bonifacio Lacwasan Jr., and key representatives from the provincial and municipal agriculture offices who facilitated the implementation of the SOA in the field.
